THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF STRUGGLE BETWEEN SPIRIT AND FLESH IN EIGHT NOVELS BY WILLIAM FAULKNER

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by

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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ALLEGORY

Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, is inhabited by a colorful collection of characters. From the wide screen of William Faulkner's mind are projected a cast of three dimensional people who inhabit a mythical place and time. Carved of southern rock and stamped indelibly with Mississippi, these characters are, however, memorable because they are hewn from universal stock. Master craftsman Faulkner claimed to draw from a "lumber room"[1] which consisted mainly of scraps of material from his own life in Mississippi and information garnered from such sources as "Don Quixote, Heart of Darkness, The Nigger of the Narcissus, The Brothers Karamazov, Anna Karenina, Madame Bovary, and the Old Testament."[2]

Though Faulkner attended classes at both Oxford High School and The University of Mississippi, he graduated from neither. His knowledge of literature was gained primarily from his own curious exploration. His books reveal that he had more than a passing interest in Greek and Roman mythology. His range of sources from which to draw allusions is wide and varied.

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[1] Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, (eds.), Faulkner in the University (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 117.

[2] Ibid., p. 150.

One of the first things a reader of Faulkner learns is that Biblical knowledge is a necessary tool for the exploration of meaning in the lore of Yoknapatawpha County. In fact, it is quite obvious in all the works of Faulkner that this great creator of a mythical county was a careful student of the work of another and greater Creator whose work men have traditionally called Holy.

Another elementary lesson in the study of Faulkner concerns the strange behavior exhibited by this American story teller in the presence of those ever annoying curiosity hunters who call themselves interviewers. Faulkner played a game with these people. He often intentionally forgot, evaded, or distorted his own material. Like the French architect in Absalom, Absalom! or Joe Christmas in Light in August, Faulkner employed all sorts of devices. He switched shoes and scampered up trees with the amazing speed and perplexing craftiness of the often hunted fox.

For instance, on May 16, 1957, Faulkner answered a question directed at his reading and knowledge of the New Testament as well as the Old. His reply consisted of the following remarks: "To me the New Testament is full of ideas and I don't know much about ideas."[1] The old fox stood at the door to his den, but the baying pack of hounds went racing

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[1] Ibid., p. 167.

over the next hill. It would be more realistic for William Faulkner to say that his background was in Duluth, Minnesota, than to say that he had no interest in ideas. The average reader is overwhelmed by the first chapter of most of his works. The careful reader spends years piecing together the threads. It is even more curious that a man not concerned with the New Testament would be so careful to structure two of his favorite novels, The Sound and the Fury and A Fable around the events of Passion Week.

The only trail that this crafty literary fox ever left is found in the volumes of his works. And those works show that Faulkner borrowed extensively from the Old and New Testaments with equal delight. His usage of the Bible shows that he saw it as a total work, each of the two divisions equally dependent upon the other for meaning.

In his later years Faulkner seldom took an active part in the activities of any church. However, he himself testifies to the solid background he and his brothers received in traditional southern Christianity. Both surviving brothers mention excerpts from boyhood Sunday School activities in their memoirs. Murry Faulkner records this information in his book, The Falkners of Oxford: " Mother had been a Baptist, but we were baptized in the Methodist Church."[1] Mrs. John

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[1]Murry C. Falkner, The Falkners of Oxford (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), p. 25.

Falkner, an aging aunt of the author, tells of the interest Faulkner had in religion, and pointed out the location of the old Methodist parsonage which would have been adjacent to the boyhood Faulkner home.[1]

One theme of Christianity seemed to interest Faulkner more than any of the others. His concern with the ideas of death, rebirth, and the struggle between spirit and flesh is constantly recurrent and heavily Christian. Biblically, the ideas of which Faulkner writes may be summarized best by the writings of Paul in his letter to the Galatians:

> For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.[2]

Martin Luther, writing in explanation of this verse, summarized something of the pattern which Faulkner uses in his works.

> These two leaders, the flesh and the Spirit, are bitter opponents. . . . Don't despair if you feel the flesh battling against the Spirit or if you cannot make it behave.[3]

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[1]This information was obtained by personal interview on September 4, 1967.

[2]Galatians 5:17, King James Version of the Holy Bible.

[3]Martin Luther, Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, translated by Theodore Graebner (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), pp. 222, 223.

Faulkner saw life as a vicious universal struggle in which every man is involved. His characters are warped and cast in the violence of the South. But the greatest struggle, the never ending struggle Faulkner characterizes in his great pageants of human life, is the allegorical combat between physical and spiritual, flesh and spirit.

The first element of the pattern is ever present in Faulkner's source. The Bible is full of struggle. The book of Genesis introduces the reader to a great struggle, man's rebellion and subsequent death. Throughout the book the constant and recurring pattern appears. Only in the final pages is the struggle complete. Christ, as God, overcomes the final adversary, that of death, and those faithful men who have survived the struggle are allowed once again to share in the perfect joys of the spirit.

The great and recurring battle of man is pictured in the New Testament as between the spirit and the flesh. From the beginnings when God created man from dust, and breathed the Spirit of Life into his nostrils, man has been torn between the desire to be earthly, and the desire to be spiritual. God's plan, however, for conquering death, and offering liberation from struggle, was to make himself flesh, in the person of His Son and to personally meet death in combat. Jesus in the flesh suffered from the very struggle with

which man is faced. Upon death and resurrection, however, Christ realized a victory of the spirit over the flesh.[1]

According to the third chapter of John, Christ sought to explain the significance of rebirth to Nicodemus. He compared spiritual rebirth to physical birth, and makes a point of the parallels. Another New Testament writer carries the analogy one step further.

> Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so shall we walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection.[2]

A final conclusion is that the Christian becomes, by the process of rebirth, a living part of the resurrected body of Christ.[3]

Every reader of Faulkner who wishes to explore the depth and meaning of his work is confronted with the necessity of a key, a pattern to follow. The scriptural pattern of struggle, death, and rebirth fascinated Faulkner. This pattern is the central theme of an allegory which he applied to eight novels which he produced from the years 1929 through 1939.

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[1] I Corinthians 15, King James Version of the Holy Bible.

[2] Romans 6:4-6, King James Version of the Holy Bible.

[3] Colossians 1:18, King James Version of the Holy Bible.

This study shall expose thematic struggle between spirit and flesh as it develops in these eight novels. The logical beginning place is with the Sartoris family, which is the subject of two books by Faulkner, Sartoris and The Unvanquished. Sartoris ended on a rather bitter note, so the author wrote of the family again. In The Unvanquished, the theme is approached from a more positive position, with the leading character achieving spiritual heroism.

In five other novels Faulkner used the same underlying theme as a fundamental guideline for characterization and symbol. Four of these novels, The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Sanctuary, and Absalom, Absalom! reflect the theme of struggle between spirit and flesh from a negative point of view and picture man as losing in the great combat. The novel Pylon reverses the pessimism long enough to show a leading character as a spiritual hero. The other four accounts show modern man as being apathetic, indifferent, unconcerned, or frightened in the face of his greatest struggle, that of the human heart.

In one book, however, Faulkner develops a masterpiece around the allegorical theme of struggle between spirit and flesh. Only in Light in August does Faulkner succeed in giving his characters positive spiritual heroism while at the same time tracing the spirit-flesh-rebirth theme to a valid conclusion in the book.

Even Light in August is used by the author as a tool by which to criticize the modern church. Each of the novels expresses a similar concern with twentieth century spiritual values as reflected by the flaws of the church.

CHAPTER II

SARTORIS: "THE GERM OF MY APOCRYPHA"

On May 23, 1958, in a general session open to the public at the University of Virginia, William Faulkner was asked which of his books would best serve as an initial reading for sequential study in Yoknapatawpha County history. In a typically terse reply, Faulkner suggested Sartoris as the " germ of my Apocrypha."[1] The author's reply to the question is most helpful in a study of the book Sartoris and its sequel, The Unvanquished. By the very use of the term "Apocrypha" Faulkner prepares the alert observer for a study of Christianity in his writings. The Apocrypha was a collection of writings used by the early church which for various reasons were not considered acceptable for inclusion in the group of writings which have been accepted for centuries as the Holy Bible. Thus, Faulkner suggests that his creation is his apocrypha or perhaps, the gospel according to Faulkner.

Many things might be said about the novel Sartoris. What has been most often said is that this book, first published in early 1929, was the first to have its roots deep in Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi. Others have noted the fact that this is the book which first stirred the great

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[1] Faulkner in the University, op. cit., p. 285.

creative desire in Faulkner. For the purposes of this study, however, Sartoris is the first Faulkner novel to consider the recurrent allegorical theme of struggle, death, and rebirth.

The theme is based upon the proud Sartoris family of Jefferson, Mississippi, with primary emphasis upon young Bayard Sartoris III, recently returned from service as pilot in the World War I. Faulkner was apparently dissatisfied with his handling of the allegory in this initial book, for five years later, in 1934, he began publication of a series of magazine articles dealing with the same Sartoris family at the time of the Civil War. The serials appeared in the Saturday Evening Post and Scribner's Magazine as six stories scattered over a two-year period. In 1938, Faulkner revised the six stories, wrote a seventh chapter, and published the book under the title The Unvanquished.

Together the two books provide an in depth study of the Sartoris family from the Civil War through World War I. The fierce, proud struggle between spirit and flesh is traced through each generation and all heirs of the proud Sartoris name. Always and again Faulkner's emphasis is upon the struggle of the human heart. That this is Faulkner's intent and theme in nearly all of his writing is evidenced in the memorable words he spoke at the acceptance of the Nobel Prize for Literature in Stockholm on December 10, 1950.

> Our tragedy today is a general and physical fear so long sustained by now that we can even bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. . . . Because of this, the young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat.[1]

The problems of the human heart in both Sartoris and The Unvanquished are very clearly the problems of John Sartoris and the heirs of his proud name.

The proud Sartoris name lends itself to derivational speculation. For instance, few will deny that the character John Sartoris is based upon the life of Faulkner's own grandfather, William C. Falkner. The similarities are too striking to overlook.[2]

Given Faulkner's fascination with the ambivalent Christian inner struggle and his similar fascination for name symbolism, the reader may find other clues to the derivation of the name. There are two possibilities. First, the name may be traced to the Latin "Sartor" meaning tailor. Perhaps Faulkner refers to the fact that all the Sartorises seem to be cloaked, even perhaps, tailored with physical violence. It is also quite possible that Faulkner, with an admittedly

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[1]William Faulkner, "Speech of Acceptance upon the Award of the Nobel Prize for Literature," Bear, Man and God, Utley, Bloane, and Kinney, editors (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 170.

[2]Robert Cantwell, "Forward to Sartoris," Sartoris, William Faulkner (New York: The New American Library, 1964), p. ix.

wide nineteenth century reading background, had read and been influenced by Thomas Carlyle. In "Sartor Resartus" Carlyle pictured mankind as being clothed with a type of universal soul. "The Tailor Retailored," as the title translates, also calls attention to the ambivalence between spirit and flesh.

Another possible derivation of this important name takes into account Faulkner's very proud southern accent and deep interest in Greek mythology. The satyrs were said to be woodland deities in a form half human and half animal. If one pronounces satyrs with a southern inflection, a sound very similar to Sartoris is produced. The fierce, brooding, violently physical Sartorises are much like Greek gods, and are often pictured as being strangely wild. The ambivalent struggle theme may still be continued from this viewpoint because the satyrs were violently torn between an animal existence and a god-like human existence. In any event, Faulkner weaves together a strange and powerful tale in two books concerning the Sartoris family.

Whatever the derivation of the name, it is certain that Faulkner chose it to dominate Jefferson, Mississippi, as a living legend. He does this through the character John Sartoris. This man is elevated to his pinnacle by obvious devices in both of the works involving the Sartoris family. In the 1929 book, for instance, John Sartoris' spirit dominates the account. Will Falls recalls his greatness in a

nostalgic scene which opens the book and clearly sets the tone for the spirit versus flesh conflict:

> As usual, old man Falls had brought John Sartoris into the room with him, had walked the three miles in from the county Poor Farm, fetching, like an odor, like the clean dusty smell of his faded overalls, the spirit of the dead man into that room . . . (the man) who had passed beyond death and then returned.
>
> Freed as he was of time and flesh, he was a far more palpable presence than either of the two old men who sat shouting periodically into one another's deafness.[1]

In The Unvanquished, however, we see John Sartoris, the epitome of Southern honor and bravery, through the eyes of his admiring son. For instance, the Colonel outsmarts the Yankees and flees in a surge of impressive violence on his equally significant mount, Jupiter.

> "Get away," Father said. He went up onto Jupiter's bare back like a bird, holding him for a moment and looking down at us. . . . Jupiter took the doors on his chest only they seemed to burst before he even touched them, and I saw him and Father again like they were flying in the air, with broken planks whirling and spinning around them when they went out of sight.[2]

John Sartoris came to Jefferson, Mississippi, from Carolina, building his legend with him. He, more than any other of Faulkner's characters, is "the unvanquished." In carving out his legend, John Sartoris forces his way into a dominant

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[1]William Faulkner, Sartoris (New York: The New American Library, 1964), p. 19.

[2]William Faulkner, The Unvanquished (New York: The New American Library, 1962), p. 62.

role in Jefferson. He builds a railroad. He stops Northern interference in the only way he knows. He interrupts his wedding to the hard and violent Drusilla, to murder two early civil rights workers who seek to force the election of a Negro as Marshal of Jefferson. John Sartoris performs the execution; his bride to be, in her wedding dress, stands beside him. Without a doubt, Faulkner intends this picture of John Sartoris to represent cruel, hard, physical existence. Drusilla's mother makes these comments as she surveys the scene.

> "And who are these, pray? Your wedding train of forgetters? Your groomsmen of murder and robbery?"[1]

We see the whole picture of John Sartoris, as presented in The Unvanquished through the eyes of his son. And though the book is primarily the story of the life and struggle of that son, Bayard, it is also the story of a son's appreciation of his father's struggle and moral heroism. The climax of the book comes when John Sartoris is gunned down by an enemy, and young Bayard is expected to avenge his father's death according to Southern tradition. Though Bayard is often regarded as hero for his non-violent victory over murder, Faulkner seems to say it is the father, John Sartoris, who is the real hero. John Sartoris changes his son's life when he says:

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[1] Ibid., p. 159.

> "Yes, I have accomplished my aim, and now I shall do a little moral housecleaning. I am tired of killing men, no matter what the necessity nor the end.. Tomorrow, when I go to town and meet Ben Redmond, I shall be unarmed."[1]

John Sartoris' spirit, giant that it is, masters his violent fleshly nature. The proud, haughty, victorious spirit of John Sartoris is unvanquished. His statue stands symbolically surveying the valley below the cemetery bluff. Forty-five years after old Bayard's victory over violence, a near collision causes the old man's grandson to lose control of his high powered sports car at the foot of the cemetery bluff. Old Bayard's ailing heart gives way to fright, and, despite his grandson's masterful driving, the old man dies. Meanwhile,

> directly above them John Sartoris' effigy lifted its florid stone gesture and from amid motionless cedars gazed out on the valley where for two miles the railroad he had built ran beneath his carven eyes.[2]

Faulkner implies that old Bayard, even in dying, remains in the shadow of his father's greatness. The dominant spirit of John Sartoris is especially noted with the decay of the family name. As the last surviving blood Sartoris, Aunt Jenny, muses upon the death of the last adult male Sartoris, young Bayard, she, too, is haunted by the dominance of her dead brother. Her reverie upon the Sartoris dead concludes.

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[1] Ibid., p. 175.

[2] William Faulkner, Sartoris, op. cit., p. 245.

> But she knew what it would be, what with the virus, the inspiration and example of that one which dominated them all, which gave the whole place, in which weary people were supposed to be resting, an orotund solemnity having no more to do with mortality than the bindings of books have to do with their characters.[1]

Early in the same book, Faulkner uses Aunt Jenny to acquaint the reader with another Sartoris, John's younger brother, named, of course, Bayard. Jenny recalls, rather proudly, rather sadly the foolhardy deed which her younger brother performed behind Yankee lines to rob himself of the flashy physical life which he so enjoyed. His careless, carefree attitude is shared by later Sartorises. He is the essence of physical life, filled with vigor and extreme good health.

> That Carolina Bayard had been rather a handful even for Sartorises. Not so much a black sheep as a nuisance, all of whose qualities were positive and unpredictable. His were merry blue eyes, and his rather long hair fell in tawny curls about his temples. His high-colored face wore that expression of rank and high-hearted dullness which you might imagine Richard First as wearing before he went Crusading.[2]

As the characterization of Bayard I shows, he is representative of flaming southern pride, violence, youth, and rebellion. Given Faulkner's knowledge of French history and literature, it is quite possible that Bayard I is named for Pierre Terrail Bayard, a fifteenth Century soldier and knight,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 298, 299.

[2] Ibid., p. 25.

who was noted for his heroic war experiences. It is interesting to note that many of Pierre Bayard's ancestors had fallen in battle.[1]

It is also possible to see Bayard Sartoris I as a flashy, nineteenth century Faulknerian "satyr." He is physical, violent and rebellious. Unlike his brother John I, he is apparently untroubled by the spiritual side of his Sartoris nature. His highest joy culminates in a completely careless attitude toward death. His reckless bravery passes for courage, and lives on to shape the legends which surround his life.

In Sartoris, the earliest of the two Sartoris family novels, John Sartoris' son Bayard II is characterized as the town's leading and conservative banker, who has grown old and nearly deaf fighting a battle with heart trouble. He is rather eccentric and slightly surly. The greatness which so encompassed his father has overshadowed his own life. Without question Bayard had been named for the fiery young soldier who had been his uncle, but his stubborn conservative ways hardly make him a representative Sartoris. He is, however, beset by many domestic difficulties involving the Sartoris name and the typical struggle. He is the old patriarch of the

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[1] "Bayard, Pierre Terrail," Encyclopedia Britannica (1964), III, p. 308.

clan which is sadly and violently dying before his eyes.

> "I have already outlived my time," old Bayard continued. "I am the first of my name to see sixty years that I know of. I reckon Old Marster is keeping me for a reliable witness to the extinction of it."[1]

Perhaps the very fact that Bayard II is a secondary character in Sartoris contributed to the fact that Faulkner felt compelled to write an account of the Sartorises which included the overlooked years of his youth.

In The Unvanquished, the initiation of young Bayard takes place. The setting is the broken "vanquished" South of the Civil War. Bayard is young, impressionable and heavily influenced by his hero father. His grandmother, Rosa Millard, instills within him a fierce southern patriotism and pride. Together with Ringo, his black counterpart and shadow, Bayard and his grandmother lead a strangely violent and physical life during the war-torn years. Bayard, the youth, discovers life to be harsh and brutal. He shares the experience with Ringo, who seems to be shaped out of Faulkner's fertile mind especially for this segment of the Sartorian development. Ringo is Bayard's age. They are as close as twins; yet they are separated by a vast gulf--their color. There are obvious parallels to the situation which existed between the Sartoris twins in Sartoris. They, too, are twins, yet separated by

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[1]William Faulkner, Sartoris, op. cit., p. 96.

the vast gulf of death. Early in The Unvanquished Bayard speaks of the relationship which the two boys share.

> We--Ringo and I--ran as one, in mid-stride out of frozen immobility, across the back yard and around the house, where Granny was standing at the top of the steps.[1]

Together, the two impressionable young graduates of the school of flaming warfare seek to avenge the cowardly murder of Bayard's grandmother. In one of Faulkner's most grotesque scenes, the two fourteen-year-old men stalk a killer. Together they sordidly and revengefully execute his death. For the commencement exercise from the school of violence in which they had been reared, they nail the carcass to the side of a shed, and cut off the right hand as a token to be placed upon Grandmother Millard's grave.

But a change takes place in the attitudes and ideals of Bayard Sartoris after this initial adolescent act of pure vengeance. The change takes place, no doubt, because young Bayard Sartoris feels the same struggle of the human heart that his father was acquainted with. Finally, Faulkner places Bayard in a situation where he must be stirred again to vengeance. His behavior in regard to the circumstance is the climax of the novel and the point which Faulkner tries to make. Southern tradition masculine honor, and the Sartoris name are at stake. But Bayard turns his back on all of his

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[1]William Faulkner, The Unvanquished, op. cit., p. 28.

violent training and displays the spiritual side of the Sartoris name.

That Bayard recognizes the situation and the importance of his decision is reflected in his assessment of Ringo, who rides to bring him the message of his father's death. He realizes that a change in thinking has taken place.

> Ringo was waiting; I remember how I thought then that no matter what might happen to either of us, I would never be The Sartoris to him. He was twenty-four too, but in a way he had changed even less than I had since that day we nailed Grumby's body to the door of the old compress.[1]

Bayard's moral and spiritual choice is also reflected in comments that he makes in regard to Professor Wilkins, who has apparently been a wise counselor.

> We shook hands; I knew he believed that he was touching flesh which might not be alive tomorrow night and I thought for a second how if I told him what I was going to do, since we had talked about it, about how if there was anything at all in the Book, anything of hope and peace for His blind and bewildered spawn which He had chosen above all others to offer immortality, THOU SHALT NOT KILL must be it. . . But I did not tell him. He was too old to be forced so, to condone even in principle such a decision; he was too old to have to stick to principle in the face of blood and raising and background.[2]

Since the entire account is seen through the eyes of Bayard, Faulkner allows the reader to glimpse the depths to which the young man has plunged in his struggle with morality.

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[1] Ibid., p. 164.

[2] Ibid., p. 165.

Drusilla represents warmth and tradition and fierce physical family pride. Yet Bayard views her comments from a reserved spiritual point of view. The very words used to describe her show that Bayard views her as the physical side of the struggle.

> She stood back, staring at me--the face tearless and exalted, the feverish eyes brilliant and voracious. "How beautiful you are: do you know it? How beautiful: young, to be permitted to kill, to be permitted vengeance, to take into your bare hands the fire of heaven that cast down Lucifer."[1]

In reaction to her comments Bayard is composed, nearly serene. The Sartoris spirit seems to have mastered the situation. The same quiet control allows Bayard to face Redmond unarmed on the next day. But the confrontation is too much for Drusilla. Her physical nature is shattered and the realization of the situation is too much for her. She becomes nearly hysterical.

Faulkner cannot resist one more reminder of the change that has come in Bayard's life. On the way to meet Redmond, Bayard and Ringo have one more confrontation. There are recollections of the Grumby incident to remind the reader that Ringo still represents the call to violence.

> "Wait for me here," I said.
> "I'm going with you," he said, not loud; we stood there under the still circumspect eyes and spoke quietly to one another like two conspirators. Then I saw the pistol, the outline of it inside his shirt, probably the one we had taken from Grumby that day we killed him.

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[1] Ibid., p. 180.

"No you ain't," I said.
"Yes I am."
"No, you ain't."[1]

With the same deliberate attitude of mastery, Bayard walks into the office of Redmond. Unarmed and silent, he watches Redmond fire two shots. The picture of Bayard in the room calls to mind the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount:

> Ye have heard that it hath been said An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.[2]

All that comes after the scene with Redmond is basically anticlimactic, but one incident is worthy of particular note. On the way home, landmarks and scenes from the past remind Bayard of the fierceness and violence of his past and his father. Caught in his reverie, Bayard lies down to sleep.

> I slept for almost five hours and I didn't dream anything at all yet I waked myself up crying, crying too hard to stop it.[3]

Perhaps Bayard's tears come from grief for his father, or perhaps reminiscence for the past; they might even stem from the emotional realization of his own act of spiritual heroism.

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[1] Ibid., p. 186.

[2] Matthew 5:38, 39, King James Version of the Holy Bible.

[3] William Faulkner, The Unvanquished, op. cit., p. 190.

Faulkner, however, probably had a previous scene in mind. The comparison to Bayard's previous act of vengeance is complete with the ritual of tears. After fastening Grumby's right hand to the marker on Granny's grave, Bayard describes the reaction this way:

> And then we both began to cry.[1] We stood there in the slow rain, crying.

The 1929 book, Sartoris, traces the Sartoris family into the twentieth century and seeks to bring the Bayard-John characters together in one, a set of twins. The twins are the grandsons of old Bayard and are the great grandchildren of railroad builder John Sartoris. Their father represents a missing generation in the Sartoris scheme. He is rarely mentioned. His tombstone points to the fact that an early death has left old Bayard responsible for the rearing of the two very troublesome twin boys.

Perhaps one of the reasons why John Sartoris II is not developed into a major character is the fact that Faulkner had to crowd him into his usually accurate time scale. For instance, John could not have been born before 1877. His father, Bayard II, avenges the death of John Sartoris I in September, 1876, and no indication of wife or child is then given. The twins are reported to have been born on March 16, 1893. Thus their father could hardly have been sixteen years

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[1] Ibid., p. 142.

old. Faulkner himself, had this comment about John Sartoris II:

> From '70 to 1912-1914 nothing happened to Americans to speak of. This John Sartoris lived in that time when there was nothing that brought the issue to him to be brave and strong or dramatic.[1]

Perhaps the very fact that John Sartoris II is mentioned only in passing contributes to the very flavor of the book Sartoris. Three generations of John Sartorises are, in fact, treated as deceased in the account. The spirit of John Sartoris I dominates the accounts from the beginning. John Sartoris III is the twin brother who has died in World War I combat. His death and his spirit haunt the remaining twin, Bayard III, until Bayard finally takes his own life.

The twins, like all Sartorises, are born and bred on violence. They are two halves of the same whole. But it seems, at least to Bayard, that Johnny is the one who is always most successful. He is even successful in dying a hero's death.

Faulkner appears to be making a type of allegory with the twins. They are reminiscent of Castor and Pollux of Greek mythology. They are one and yet separate. One lives in a spirit world; the other, in a very natural and physically violent world.

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[1] Faulkner in the University, op. cit., pp. 251, 252.

Young Bayard, as a representation, perhaps symbol of physical life, is identified always with violence; it is part of his characterization. The first glimpse at Bayard foreshadows what is to come. Immediately he speaks of his dead brother, though nothing has been spoken to warrant such discussion. His movement, his actions, suggest violence.

> Young Bayard stood in the moonlight. His eyes were cavernous shadows. "I tried to keep him from going up there on that goddam little popgun," he said at last with brooding savageness. Then he moved again and old Bayard lowered his feet, but his grandson only dragged a chair violently up beside him and flung himself into it. His motions were abrupt also, like his grandfather's but controlled and flowing for all their violence.[1]

Bayard Sartoris III is a product of Faulkner's age. He is the soldier returned home, a dominant theme in the author's earlier Soldiers' Pay. He is lost, he is wrapped in violence. But he is looking for something. Bayard Sartoris is the physical man looking for his spiritual life and not knowing how to find it. The spiritual life is embodied in his brother, but he can picture his brother only in physical terms. His room reminds him only of the "young masculine violence of their twinship."[2] And as Bayard Sartoris contemplates the emptiness of his harsh physical life, he is "thinking of his

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[1] William Faulkner, Sartoris, op. cit., p. 51.

[2] Ibid., p. 53.

dead brother; the spirit of their violent complementing days lay like dust everywhere in the room."[1]

Bayard is a man, cold and physical who is searching for his soul. Aunt Jenny says, however, that he has no soul.[2] His soul is the other half of his existence; it is as foreign and yet as meaningful to him as his brother's death. Therefore, Bayard is forever "seeking his brother who in turn is somewhere seeking him, never the two to meet."[3]

The entire text of Sartoris examines the plight of Bayard, a young man searching for that missing spiritual side of his life. He first searches in memory, but finds only torture there. We then see Bayard in flashes and pictures as he seeks to master his situation with speed and any other form of physical violence. To exaggerate Bayard's love of speed, Faulkner places it against the calm silence of rural Jefferson.

> Bayard drove on down the valley toward town, passing the iron gates and the serene white house among its trees, and went on at speed. The sound of the unmuffled engine crashed into the dust and swirled it into lethargic bursting shapes and faded across the planted land. Just outside of town he came upon another wagon and he held the car upon it until the mules reared, tilting the wagon; then he swerved and whipped past with not an inch to spare, so close that the yelling Negro in the wagon could see the lipless and savage derision of his teeth.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 54.

[2] Ibid., p. 167.

[3] Ibid., p. 258.

[4] Ibid., p. 107.

Bayard's automobile becomes a type of symbol for the recklessness and carelessness of his attitude. Another symbol develops with the wild horse. The horse is a challenge, the epitome of unconquerable physical power. Bayard sees the horse as another opportunity to prove himself hero, and this is his one Sartoris desire.

But riding the wild horse is merely a sign of bravado, requiring only reckless physical courage, and failing to satisfy the thirst of his fermenting spirit. The horse is symbol, too, of the power and strength which was so much a part of the Sartoris tradition. But Bayard is incapable of understanding or capturing either horse or spirit. The horse stood . . . .

> like a motionless bronze flame, and along its burnished coat ran at intervals little tremors of paler flame, little tongues of nervousness and pride. But its eye was quiet and arrogant, and occasionally and with a kingly air, its gaze swept along the group at the gate with a fine disdain, without seeing them as individuals at all, and again little tongues of paler flame rippled flicking along its coat.[1]

While Bayard flirts and toys with violence symbolized in both the automobile and the horse, his real search for meaning is developed in another Faulknerian allegory. The harsh violence of Bayard's physical existence is contrasted with the serene, nearly mystical personality of Narcissa.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 115, 116.

The first confrontation shows Faulkner's success in making Narcissa a quiet reserved foil for Bayard.

> He said "Hello" vaguely and she turned on the piano bench and shrank a little against the instrument.
> "Who is it?" he said. He came in bringing with him that cold leashed violence which she remembered.[1]

The author chooses first to explode Bayard's harsh violent nature against the calm Mississippi countryside; then against the cool peace of Narcissa. In each case, his purpose is to exaggerate the physical aspect of his nature.

To Bayard at least, Narcissa embodies the peaceful, spiritual characteristics. She also fills the requirements of Faulkner's allegory.

It must not be forgotten that William Faulkner, for all of his fascination with Christianity was never himself a practicing adult Christian. Thus, cool, serene, Narcissa is the perfect personification of the church as Faulkner saw it. Added to her serenity was a sense of weakness and a stubborn concern for appearances, two qualities which Faulkner must have found distasteful in the Christianity of Oxford, Mississippi.

The allegory takes one more step toward fulfillment when the reader considers the origin of Narcissa's name. The name may be traced to the associations with self-love, and

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[1] Ibid., p. 75.

self-destruction which generate from the Narcissus accounts of Attic lore. Narcissa's character is the more fully developed because of this name symbol. Perhaps the real reason for her aloof personality is best illustrated by the name. She is cool and withdrawn because she loves only herself. But if this is true of Narcissa, it is also true of Bayard. And his infatuation with Narcissa may be only one more Faulknerian symbol of the search for that other side of his nature. Falling in love with the personification of self-love may represent Bayard's attempt to search within himself, an attempt that fails, because it leads only to self-pity.

Bayard becomes more and more a tragic hero, in the fullest Greek sense of the word, as his harsh physical pride sends him from one roaring violent failure to another. He fails to master the wild horse. He fails to master his automobile. The latter incident proves that he could not even succeed in death. As he broods upon his inability to succeed in the fatal recklessness at which his brother excelled, he is attracted to the devotion of Narcissa, who comes daily to read to him as if fulfilling some sort of ritual. Perhaps once again Faulkner is viewing Narcissa as the church. She comes to console and comfort Bayard, but doesn't know how to do it. Instead of establishing meaningful dialogue, she reads to Bayard. Instead of helping to solve his problems she lulls

him to sleep. Finally he remonstrates, calling attention to the allegory Faulkner draws.

> "What makes you afraid to talk to me?"
> "Afraid?" she repeated. "Had you rather I'd go?"
> "What? No, damn it. I want you to be human for one time and talk to me."[1]

Despite the lack of meaningful communication, the spell of Narcissa's influence falls upon Bayard. Narcissa detects the change in a scene in which Faulkner can't resist the chance to show that her "reading" is as meaningless to her as it is to Bayard.

> And she sat with the page open on her knees, a page whose words left no echoes whatever in her mind, looking at his calm face. It was again like a bronze mask, purged by illness of the heat of its violence, yet with the violence still slumbering there and only refined a little.[2]

But Narcissa is unprepared for the real needs of Bayard Sartoris. She is genuinely frightened, nearly terrorized as he tells her of the nightmare which haunts him, the source of his terrible despair.

> "Please, please," she implored, struggling; she could feel the flesh of her wrists, feel the bones turn in it as a loose garment, could see his bleak eyes and the fixed derision of his teeth, and suddenly she swayed forward in her chair and her head dropped between her prisoned arms and she wept with hopeless and dreadful hysteria.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 200.

[2] Ibid., p. 201.

[3] Ibid., p. 207.

Part of the frustration which Narcissa cannot understand is revealed as Bayard relates the account of his brother's death. His brother leaps from the plane to his death, but he leaps as if he were jumping into a pond or onto a haystack. It is this easiness, this spiritual mystery, which so intrigues Bayard. Further, he is troubled because John's body is never found. Thus, the mystery of the spiritual twin is further expressed.

Because of the release, the escape, that Narcissa provided, though hardly voluntary, Bayard looks to her for a relationship that Faulkner clearly implies is as false and meaningless as the peace of twilight.

> "Does it hurt?"
>
> "No" he answered, and his hand shut again on her wrists that made no effort to withdraw. The sun was gone, and twilight, foster dam of quietude and peace, filled the fading room, and evening had found itself.
>
> "And you won't drive that car fast any more?" she persisted in the dusk.
>
> "No," he answered.[1]

The marriage that Bayard and Narcissa share is doomed. If Faulkner's allegory is to be interpreted as the marriage of a twentieth century seeker to the twentieth century church, the answer is that the church is not providing answers and is

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[1] Ibid., p. 209.

not satisfying the needs of the seeker. This is Faulkner's picture of what happened to Bayard and Narcissa.

> His lips would be chill on hers and his eyes bleak and haunted, and in the yellow firelight of their room she would cling to him, or lie crying quietly in the darkness beside his rigid body, with a ghost between them.[1]

Bayard's struggle becomes even more tragic as he forces himself to flee from the homestead and Narcissa, and all past failures. After failing to overcome the symbol of the horse, and the automobile, he is finally responsible for his grandfather's death. Old Bayard's heart attack is no surprise. Both Dr. Peabody and Aunt Jenny had predicted it. But the scene is important because Bayard's struggle with himself is brought to a climax here. All that happens afterward is anti-climax. He doesn't have the moral strength to face the family. He must run away, because he has never been able to find the moral and spiritual strength which he has been searching for. He flees first to the haven of the MacCallums because he reasons that they would not yet be aware of the circumstances surrounding old Bayard's death or of his moral cowardice in fleeing. There he pauses to ponder and perhaps to rationalize his situation.

> He stared into the fire for a time, rubbing his hands slowly on his knees and for an instant he saw the recent months of his life coldly in all their headlong and heedless wastefulness, saw its entirety like

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[1] Ibid., p. 240.

> the swift unrolling of a film, culminating in that which he had been warned against and that any fool might have foreseen. Well, damn it, suppose it had: was he to blame? Had he insisted that his grandfather ride with him? Had he given the old fellow a bum heart? and then coldly: *You were afraid to go home. You made a nigger sneak your horse out to you. You, who deliberately do things your judgment tells you may not be successful, even possible, are afraid to face the consequences of your own acts.* Then something bitter and deep and sleepless in him blazed out in vindication and justification and accusation; what, he knew not, blazing out at what, whom, he did not know; *You did it! You caused it all; you killed Johnny.*[1]

The italicized sections (Faulkner's) illustrate very cleverly the guilt feelings that haunt anti-hero Bayard. They also illustrate the author's familiarity with a passage of scripture which discusses very fully the implications of the struggle between spirit and flesh.

> For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.
> If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.
> Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
> For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.
> For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.
> Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
> I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.
> For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:
> But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 251.

> O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?[1]

The rather unusual style which Faulkner adapts for this particular section is very similar to that used by the quoted King James version, complete with extravagant use of colons, simicolons, and other rhetorical devices. The thoughts expressed are similar also. Bayard Sartoris is a twentieth century wretched man. He is ridden with guilt, searching for meaning and finding nothing.

The struggle continues, developing even further the Biblical source, as Bayard spends a nearly sleepless night troubling about his guilt and his brother's death. He, like the apostle Paul, is seeking a deliverance from the "body of this death." He thinks first that perhaps he, like his brother, is dead, and that he dwells in some nightmarish hell. But then, true to the tone of Paul's writing in the epistle, he seeks deliverance from the nightmare:

> He was shaking slowly and steadily with cold; beneath his hands his flesh was rough and without sensation; yet still it jerked and jerked as though something within the dead envelope of him strove to free itself.[2]

Like the man described in the Roman letter, Bayard is wretched, knows his condition, and longs for some form of deliverance.

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[1]Romans 7:15-24, King James Version of the Holy Bible.

[2]William Faulkner, Sartoris, op. cit., p. 259.

> His blood ran again, and the covers felt like iron or ice; while he lay motionless beneath the rain his blood warmed yet more, until at last his body ceased trembling and he lay presently in something like a tortured and fitful doze, surrounded by coiling images and shapes of stubborn despair and the ceaseless striving for . . . not vindication so much as comprehension; a hand, no matter whose, to touch him out of his black chaos.[1]

Faulkner focuses closely upon Bayard's thoughts in this section. He is careful to force the reader to view the agony that Bayard feels in this greatest struggle, the culmination of all previous struggles. For this is the element of the account that is most important to the author. Bayard is undergoing the great struggle of the human heart. Faulkner would say that the tragedy comes because he is losing. Evidence of the spirit-flesh struggle motif and of the influence of the Roman epistle come in a section from the same important segment.

> His spent blood, wearied with struggling, moved through his body in slow beats, like the rain, wearing the flesh away. It comes to all . . . Bible . . . some preacher, anyway. Maybe he knew. Sleep. It comes to all.[2]

Without question, Bayard is thinking of death, and death from a Biblical perspective. "Death comes to all," he thinks. Perhaps Faulkner refers to a quotation from the same lesson on spirit and flesh which Paul delivers: "Death

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[1] Ibid., p. 260.

[2] Ibid.

passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."[1] Bayard's preoccupation with this thought is so prominent that he repeats it four times before dropping off into another fitful doze. And it is also upon this thought that Bayard receives enough comfort to soothe the struggling forces within him. The thought, of course, was not originally intended as a source for comfort, and this, too, contributes to the tragedy of Bayard's fall.

There is significant religious experience in the fact that Bayard flees the McCallums on the day before Christmas. Faulkner capitalizes on the symbol. The real reason that Bayard leaves the haven of temporary shelter is that he knows that the boys who have been to town will know of his moral cowardice. He can't stand to face them. He is much too weak for such an encounter.

Thus, he intentionally chooses the road away from Jefferson, and yet when he arrives at the Negro cabin, he claims to be lost.[2] Such is very definitely Bayard's condition. He chooses to be lost, because the alternatives of facing moral decisions are too difficult for him. His choice to be "lost" is ironic in that it comes on the one day set aside by Christians as birthday for the Savior of the lost.

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[1]Romans 5:12, King James Version of the Holy Bible.

[2]William Faulkner, Sartoris, op. cit., p. 274.

The denouement of the story unravels some other tangled webs from Faulkner's Christian symbolism. From the time that Bayard flees Jefferson, he searches for some way to find death. When he finally meets death, one final bit of tragic irony is added to his previous failures. He cannot even die the usual Sartoris death of violent bravery. He fails to match the grandiose proportions of his brother's calamity. Instead, he crashes to his death in an experimental flight at the request of a crackpot inventor.

Bayard's death is accompanied by double irony, however. His death day is his son's birthday, and the coincidence is more symbolic than structural. It is all part of a cycle that Faulkner repeats symbolically in later books. Perhaps Faulkner may be trying to allegorize still another section of the Roman letter discussed previously.

> Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?
> Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
> For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:
> Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.
> For he that is dead is freed from sin.
> Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:
> Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him.
> For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

> Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.[1]

That Faulkner was an allegorist cannot be denied. What he meant by the allegories is a matter of speculation. But it is entirely possible that Faulkner has portrayed Bayard Sartoris consistently as a representation of the physical side of life described in the scriptural passages quoted. If this is true, and if Faulkner understood the scriptures accordingly, then the physical man must die in order for the process of spiritual rebirth to occur. The struggle between spirit and flesh is complete. Bayard, physical man, dies. But immediately a Sartoris is born, or reborn, in Faulkner's allegory. Benbow Sartoris is the "newness of life." He is raised up out of the death of his father, and he is the allegorical representation of the spiritual life. The allegory is further clarified by two typically Faulknerian name symbols. Benbow Sartoris is not like his father, in that Narcissa insists that he be called by a new name. He is to be named for her side of the family, thus breaking the old Sartoris tradition. Perhaps Faulkner was even thinking of the writings of Isaiah, which prophesied the fact that Christians would be called by a "new name."[2] This also stands in conjunction with the

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[1] Romans 6:3-11, King James Version of the Holy Bible.

[2] Isaiah 62:2, King James Version of the Holy Bible.

previously established theory that Narcissa may well stand for the twentieth century church.

Aunt Jenny also makes some interesting comments in regard to a name for the child. She, too, suggests that he is different from Bayard. Her suggestion is that the child should be called John. And if the threads of the allegory are retraced, the reader may easily spot the fact that John was the twin who represented the spiritual mysteries which so plagued Bayard.

The novel ends with this final unraveling of the allegory.

> "He isn't John. He's Benbow Sartoris."
> "What?"
> "His name is Benbow Sartoris."
> Miss Jenny sat quite still for a moment. In the next room Elnora moved about, laying the table for supper. "And do you think that'll do any good?" Miss Jenny demanded. "Do you think you can change one of 'em with a name?"[1]

Aunt Jenny is speaking for the author in her last statement. The criticism is directed at Narcissa, Faulkner's personification of the church. Her suggestion carries with it the bulk of Faulkner's attack on the values of twentieth century Christianity. Simply calling a man a Christian does not make him a better person. This says Faulkner, is exactly the state of affairs. Blind to the hope represented in the new generation, the church insists on quibbling about names and rituals and customs, instead of concentrating upon the real calling, to change the heart of humanity.

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[1]William Faulkner, Sartoris, op. cit., p. 302.

CHAPTER III

FIVE MORE APOCRYPHAL ACCOUNTS

Because Sartoris failed to provide the kind of complete allegory which Faulkner hoped to develop, he applied the theme again and again on at least six more novels. Five of these attempts may be logically grouped together because they, too, fall short of the complete pattern. The five include The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Sanctuary, Absalom, Absalom!, and Pylon.

After publishing Sartoris, Faulkner set to work immediately upon finishing another version of his gospel. He switched to the Compson family, borrowed an appropriate title from Shakespeare, and completed one of his most discussed novels, The Sound and the Fury. The book was published in 1929, late in the year, making a very full season of creativity for a beginning writer.

The excitement of the allegory in Sartoris carries over into The Sound and the Fury. In fact, this very excitement might well have been the chief reason for the publication of two books within one year. There is, of course, considerable difference in presentation, but a great many similarities also present themselves.

Faulkner creates a similar decaying family history. He also flirts with the recurrent name pattern. Quentin

MacLachan Compson, for instance, fled to America from Scotland and established the family in the South. Quentin MacLachan's grandson was named Jason Lycurgus by an "embittered wooden legged indomitable father who perhaps still believed with his heart that he wanted to be a classicist school teacher."[1] It was this Jason who bargained with Ikkemotubbe for the land that was to become the huge Compson estate around which Jefferson was built. Included in the family from that point on were a governor of Mississippi, named for Quentin, and a Civil War general, named for Jason.[2]

The first two Compson sons are named for their avatars in the Compson legend. Like the Sartorises, the twentieth century counterparts are sensitive to the shadow of the legend upon them. Quentin, for instance, is about to commit suicide at Harvard in 1910 when he has this thought concerning death:

> It used to be I thought of death as a man something like Grandfather, a friend of his, a kind of private and particular friend like we used to think of Grandfather's desk not to touch it not even to talk loud in the room where it was I always thought of them as being together somewhere all the time waiting for old Colonel Sartoris to come down and sit with them waiting on a high place beyond Cedar trees Colonel Sartoris was on a still higher place looking out across at something and they were waiting for him to get done looking at it and come down

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[1] William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 406.

[2] Ibid., p. 408.

> Grandfather wore his uniform and we could hear the murmur of their voices from beyond the cedars they were always talking and Grandfather was always right.[1]

The Compsons, like the Sartorises, strangely blend a harsh practicality with an idealistic romanticism. The combination, coupled with twentieth century frustration, is too much for sensitive, Bayard-like Quentin. Knowing that his sister Caddy's marriage is forced by pregnancy, and that the affair which led to her pregnancy was not her first, Quentin is disturbed and frustrated concerning Compson family honor. Given his own deep love for his sister, he decides upon the alternative of suicide. The practical side of the Compson family appears when Quentin decides to wait for the precise day on which the semester ends to take his life. He wants to get the full value of the money sacrificed to provide the means for his education.

Another extremely practical side of the Compson family is revealed eighteen years after Quentin's suicide in a comment made by the second Compson brother, Jason IV.

> I haven't got much pride, I can't afford it with a kitchen full of niggers to feed and robbing the state asylum of its star freshman. Blood, I says, governors and generals. It's a damn good thing we never had any kings and presidents; we'd all be down at Jackson chasing butterflies.[2]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 218, 219.

[2] Ibid., p. 286.

Jason feels the burden of the pressure created by the rest of the family. After the death of Jason III, young Jason must support what remains of the family. Mrs. Compson insists, much to Jason's chagrin, that the youngest son, Benjamin, remain in the family's care though he has the mentality of a three year old. Jason also is responsible for the care of Quentin, the young daughter of Caddy left for the family to raise when Caddy disappeared.

Unlike both Quentin and Caddy, Jason is forced into accepting moral responsibility. His reaction is cynical and bitter.

> There I was, without any hat, looking like I was crazy too. Like a man would naturally think, one of them is crazy and another drowned himself and the other one was turned out in the street by her husband, what's the reason the rest of them are not crazy too.[1]

Like his namesake in classical mythology, however, Jason is also seeking a "golden fleece." He swindles the money which Caddy provides for the care of her daughter, saving every possible cent in a carefully locked box in his closet. The climax of the novel comes when his much despised niece steals his entire savings and flees the house with a carnival worker early Easter morning. Jason's rage and frustration upon the discovery are both tragic and comic as we see a man caught in

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[1] Ibid., p. 290.

a twentieth century version of the problems and dilemmas of the human heart.

Older brother Quentin III, however, is similar to Bayard Sartoris III in that they are both sensitive to spiritual values, but confused, even warped by the frustrations of seeking them. Just as Bayard Sartoris seeks a symbolic answer to his problem in Narcissa Benbow, so also does Quentin symbolically seek a kind of purging salvation through his sister Caddy. He even speculates on the spiritual merits of bearing accusations of incest.

> If it could just be hell beyond that: the clean flame the two of us more than dead. Then you will have only me then only me then the two of us amid the pointing and the horror beyond the clean flame.[1]

The allegorical pattern develops in Quentin most fully. His section of the stream of consciousness narrative follows immediately upon brother Benjy's hazy introduction. Quentin is a "Wretched man" on a day's journey to his self-inflicted death. His confusions, his struggle, the very plight of his soul are viewed in a tortured series of flashbacks drawn from the experiences of his final day. Like Sartoris' adventure with the McCallums, this is the final conflict of Quentin's troubled spirit. And the result is equally tragic, not

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[1] Ibid., p. 144.

merely because of the implied suicide, but because Quentin finds no answers and loses the struggle.

Other applications of Faulkner's Biblical knowledge force their way into the book, making the setting for the allegory the more interesting. At least two attempts are made, for example, at creating Christ figures. Benjy, gentle and meek, is thirty-three years of age on the day before Easter. He is also mocked, scorned, and mistreated. He is misunderstood and betrayed. Quentin feels like a traitor because the pasture which meant so much to Benjy is sold so that he can attend Harvard. Caddy is the only member of the family who sympathizes with and understands Benjy. Yet she, too, betrays him and leaves him confused and comfortless when she marries. Benjy is also the only member of the family who seems to possess spiritual stability. And Faulkner suggests that this is only because he doesn't realize his situation. After the emotional sermon by Rev. Shegog, Benjy is a picture of spiritual peace. "In the midst of the voices and the hands Ben sat rapt in his sweet blue gaze."[1]

Another less obvious attempt at a mock Christ figure is made with Jason. Not only are Jason's initials identical with those of Christ, but his section of the novel takes place on Good Friday. Jason is pictured as undergoing his

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[1] Ibid., p. 370.

own "passion scene." Though the terminology is not used as such, Jason is "crucified" by the Jews in the stock market. He is subjected, in his own eyes, to indignity after indignity and is tortured by a severe headache. The analogy could be stretched to include what Jason might call his "journey to Calvary."

> And now I'd have to go way around and across a plowed field, the only one I had seen since I left town, with every step like somebody was walking along behind me, hitting me on the head with a club. I kept thinking that when I got across the field at least I'd have something level to walk on, that wouldn't jolt me every step, but when I got into the weeds it was full of underbrush and I had to twist around through it and then I came to a ditch full of briers.[1]

Further, it is on Easter morning that Jason discovers a window broken in his own carefully locked room. And just as surely as the followers of Jesus found their hope of salvation missing from the tomb, so also did Jason discover his hope of financial salvation missing from his room.

In a fitting anticlimax, the novel concludes with Jason still in the midst of his exaggerated fury and spiritual frustration, and with Benjy wrapped once again in his unknowing spiritual cocoon.

In commenting upon his works, Faulkner singled out The Sound and the Fury as his favorite work because:

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[1] Ibid., p. 299.

> It was the one that I anguished the most over, that I worked the hardest at, that even when I knew I couldn't bring it off, I still worked at it.[1]

At another point in discussing the book, Faulkner referred to Caddy Compson as "my heart's darling."[2] These two comments by Faulkner have great relationship to the allegory presented in this book. Faulkner must have written The Sound and the Fury because he felt the allegory was incomplete in Sartoris. And because he was never satisfied with The Sound and the Fury, he wrote again and again, trying to capture the fullest expression of his feeling. Without question, the problem with the book was with the character Caddy.

> There were three boys and one was a girl and the girl was the only one that was brave enough to climb that tree to look in that forbidden window to see what was going on. And that's what the book--and it took the rest of the four hundred pages to explain why she was brave enough to climb the tree to look in the window. It was an image, a picture to me, a very moving picture, which was symbolized by the muddy bottom of her drawers as her brothers looked up into the apple tree that she had climbed to look in the window. And the symbolism of the muddy bottom of the drawers became the lost Caddy, which had caused one brother to commit suicide, and the other brother had misused her money...[3]

The problem is with the allegory. Faulkner must have wanted Caddy to be one character capable of balancing spirit

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[1] Faulkner in the University, op. cit., p. 61.

[2] Ibid., p. 6.

[3] Ibid., p. 31.

and flesh. But she doesn't provide the answer. All of the other characters depend upon her strength in their own weakness. Quentin is feeble in comparison to her. Jason is despicable. Benjy is dependent. Each character tells her story through his own eyes. But she is not the strong character that Faulkner wanted her to be. She is not strong because she doesn't face her own struggle; she runs away from it. She is, instead, a spiritual coward. Faulkner said it best perhaps when he described her in an appendix written in 1946. "Doomed and knew it, accepted the doom without either seeking or fleeing it."[1]

Yet, the allegorical pattern is complete in The Sound and the Fury because Faulkner includes an obvious rebirth device. Caddy's daughter is named Quentin and is born just a few months after Uncle Quentin's suicide. Faulkner explains the reason for the name doubling.

> Caddy knew the brother loved death best of all and was not jealous, would (and perhaps in the calculation and deliberation of her marriage did) have handed him the hypothetical hemlock. Was two months pregnant with another man's child which regardless of what sex would already be named Quentin after the brother whom they both (she and the brother)[2] knew was already the same as dead, when she married.

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[1] William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury, op. cit., p. 412.

[2] Ibid., pp. 412, 413.

The use of the same name for both a male and female character in a stream of consciousness book is admittedly confusing. The allegory, however, serves to explain and justify the doubling of names. Female Quentin is a rebirth figure who comes into the novel only upon the death of male Quentin.

Using the female Quentin as character presented some problems for Faulkner, too. He simply couldn't bring her to be an heroine of spiritual proportions. Like her mother and her namesake, she is pictured as losing the struggle between spirit and flesh. She provides the solution to the novel by taking the money and running, but she only makes the spiritual condition of the Compson family the more depressing.

The reader leaves The Sound and the Fury deeply impressed by Faulkner's style, but just as deeply depressed by the author's comment on modern society. The only admirable heroes in the book are Benjy and Dilsey. Thus, we may interpret Faulkner's allegory to mean that the heirs of leadership in the modern church are either idiots or minority groups with little influence, while those who could and should care about spiritual values are failing to face known religious problems, committing moral suicide, or establishing pseudo-values of egotism and materialism.

Experience gained in exploring sibling relationships in both the Sartoris and Compson families proved most helpful as Faulkner turned to another application of the thematic

pattern in As I Lay Dying. Developing his stream of consciousness technique to an almost exaggerated level, Faulkner relates the account of the death and burial of Addie Bundren through the eyes of fifteen viewers. The account is cloaked with much of the same allegorical, Christian-oriented language of the previous accounts.

Again Faulkner experiments with name symbolism. As I Lay Dying is the story of the Bundren family, and each member of the family has his own burden, revealed through the stream of consciousness technique. Each member of the family seems also quite capable of blundering. Thus the Bundrens blunder along, carrying the added burden of dead Addie Bundren forty miles to the place where she wanted to be buried.

It is Addie, however, who perhaps is the central and most meaningful character in the allegory. She is the victim of death, and as she lies dying, she watches Cash prepare her coffin outside the death room window. Addie ponders upon her life as she lies dying, and her thoughts are filled with deep religious abstractions. Addie thinks of her father's advice that life is just a long preparation for dying, and she ponders upon what she considers to be her husband's death after the birth of the second child Darl. She considers him to be dead, though living, because she had broken the marriage vow.

> And then he died. He did not know that he was dead. I would lie by him in the dark, hearing the

> dark land talking of God's love and His beauty and His sin;[1]

As Addie lies pondering, she recalls her relationship with Rev. Whitfield, and Jewel, the child born of that relationship. She considers her sin with Whitfield to be

> the more utter and terrible since he was the instrument ordained by God who created the sin to sanctify that sin He had created. While I waited for him in the woods, waiting for him before he saw me, I would think of him as dressed in sin. I would think of him as thinking of me as dressed also in sin, he the more beautiful since the garment he had exchanged for sin was sanctified.[2]

As Addie Bundren approaches death, both she and the Reverend are stricken with pangs of guilt. If Addie represents the blundering burdened twentieth century individual, and Rev. Whitfield the twentieth century church, another interesting Faulknerian allegorical postulate presents itself in Jewel, who is marked as being different from the rest of the Bundrens. His allegorical inheritance deserves study. For instance, he is much more violent and quick-tempered than any of the Bundrens. He is his mother's defender. Yet he has inherited the Puritan code of ethics and works hard for his own personal satisfaction. At the same time he is as fleshly and violent as old John Sartoris. But like Sartoris he is master of his violently physical nature.

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[1] William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (New York: The Modern Library, 1957), p. 466.

[2] Ibid.

Comparisons may be drawn to Bayard Sartoris III as well. One particularly vivid contrast presents itself when Jewel works secretly by night to purchase a dangerous but beautiful horse. Where Bayard Sartoris had failed to master his horse, Jewel displays cool and absolute mastery.

> He galloped up and stopped, his heels in the horse's ribs and it dancing and swirling like the shape of its mane and tail and the splotches of its coat had nothing whatever to do with the flesh-and-bone horse inside them.[1]

Further evidence of the fact that Jewel is representative of fleshly existence comes when he twice performs exaggerated physical acts of bravery to save the dead body of his mother from destruction other than burial. He performs great physical sacrifice for a dead body. He rescues the body from a swelling flood. He leaps into the blaze of a burning barn to retrieve it from the flames. Jewel's concern is with the physical body which had housed his mother's physical existence. He seems incapable of recognizing her spiritual existence. The reader is reminded of Addie Bundren's statement.

> He is my cross and he will be my salvation. He will save me from the water and from the fire. Even though I have laid down my life, he will save me.[2]

Other facets of the recurrent theme find their way into the narrative also. Death is followed by a possible rebirth

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[1] Ibid., p. 433.

[2] Ibid., p. 460.

figure. Dewey Dell is pregnant with an illegitimate and unwanted child. And as soon as Anse Bundren buries Addie Bundren, he brings a new Mrs. Bundren to the family caravan.

Faulkner suggests through the allegory, that the twentieth century church refuses to note or want new hope as symbolized in Dewey Dell's unborn child. Instead it chooses to blunder along, carrying dead burdens, and add new burdens to the load. His criticism is further outlined by the character Darl. Because Darl is the only member of the family to recognize the stupidity of the whole burial trip ritual, he is considered crazy. And when he tries to solve the grotesque problem by burning the barn containing the stinking corpse of added dead burdens, he only convinces the others of his insanity. Faulkner sees modern Christianity as clinging to dead and tired rituals of the past and failing to recognize the "dewey eyed, bell like "hope of fresh and new ideas. The heroes of the modern church, the twentieth century Jewels, are more concerned with saving tradition than reviving hope.

Following fast upon the publication of As I Lay Dying was the novel which was to establish itself as the most notorious of Faulkner's works. It is not without irony that the book Sanctuary was attacked critically by religious organizations because of its bold plot line. It was also Faulkner's sharpest attack upon the false values of contemporary Christianity.

The book was originally intended to be a money maker. In the midst of financial difficulty, Faulkner hit upon the idea for the novel.

> And I thought of the most horrific idea I could think of and wrote it. I sent it to the publisher, and he wrote me back and said Good Lord, if we print this, we'll both be in jail.[1]

Faulkner had written the book at approximately the same time as The Sound and the Fury, but he put it aside until he rewrote for publication in 1931. The book sold as well as Faulkner had anticipated, and established for him a popular reputation.

Significantly, however, horrific as the adventures of the book might be, the original Christian theme of earlier novels is very much a part of the novel, and is carried out as precisely as in the earlier attempts. In fact, the allegory is perhaps more visible and ironic in Sanctuary than in any of the other accounts. The very title suggests Christian overtones. The leading character, Temple Drake is a similar name symbol. Popeye is not only a good allegorical representation of physical, confused existence, but also represents the perverse and twisted carnal mind. Perhaps the novel is so shocking because Faulkner had become more and more excited about his progressing allegory, and wanted to express it in the most vivid terms possible.

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[1] Faulkner in the University, op. cit., pp. 90, 91.

The novel is certainly less grotesque and more meaningful in regard to twentieth century social comment when viewed as part of the allegory. Faulkner's accusation is that the temple of true conviction is being raped, the sanctuary of honest faith is being robbed, and nobody seems to care. Even Gowan Stevens, Temple's escort at the beginning of the novel fits the allegory. Using his name as symbol, it is possible to see him as a contemporary Stephen, the first martyr and protector of the church. Gowan is hardly a protector, and much less a martyr. The fact is he simply "Goes on."

The real tragedy of the novel, however, develops around the character Temple. She seems to be as unconcerned about the situation as anybody else. Her only fear is that somebody might see her with Popeye. She is more afraid of rats in the corn crib than she is of Popeye himself. She is too weak to bring any sort of moral accusation against Popeye, even when the life of an innocent person is at stake. Her weakness is as notable as that of Bayard Sartoris III. She deliberately lies in courtroom examination to protect her own pride, and apparently also to protect Popeye, who doesn't escape the hand of justice anyway. Appearance and pride take precedence over mercy and concern in the modern day Temple. After her testimony, for instance, Faulkner's allegorical Temple is pictured leaving the courtroom.

> Half way down the aisle the girl stopped again, slender in her smart open coat, her blank face rigid, then she moved on, her hand in the old man's.[1]

Temple Drake is much like Caddy Compson. She refuses to allow herself to become involved in her own struggle. After a horrible and sadistic rape she remains as apathetic as before. She doesn't seem to care about what has happened to her as long as she can maintain her appearances to the world.

This is Faulkner's most searing indictment of the church in modern culture. He suggests that the church remains silent while its most precious contributions to humanity are wasted by those who seek only to further their own sadistic social goals. Further he suggests that the church seeks to smugly hide these atrocities by keeping up fine physical appearances to the world.

Another example of Faulkner's use of Christian terminology for novel titles comes with the book Absalom, Absalom! Borrowing from the Old Testament accounts of David and his sons Faulkner explored sibling relationships again. He also directed his allegorical imagination in the realm of history. He had discovered in the short story "Ambuscade" that Yoknapatawpha County was not only present, it was also past. And

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[1]William Faulkner, Sanctuary (New York: The New American Library, 1951), p. 164.

there is just as much room for allegory in the past as there is in present.

Faulkner dragged Quentin Compson out of his storeroom (previous experience in The Sound and the Fury) to serve as narrator in this complex study of Thomas Sutpen and his proud Civil War Mississippi empire. Sutpen is a tragic hero in the tradition of Bayard Sartoris. But Sutpen is the more tragic in the Greek sense of the word because his real flaw is a deep and abiding pride.

Sutpen is another strong personification of physical life. He is robust, calculating and brutal.

> It seems that on certain occasions, perhaps at the end of the evening, the spectacle, as a grand finale or perhaps as a matter of sheer deadly forethought toward the retention of supremacy, domination, he would enter the ring with one of the negroes himself. Yes. That's what Ellen saw: her husband and the father of her children standing there naked and panting and bloody to the waist and the negro just fallen evidently at his feet.[1]

It is Sutpen's desire to shape a proud Southern, physical empire. His plan is methodical, meticulous, and brutal. He has a desire for a pure white empire, untainted by negro blood, but this very desire is his downfall. He structures his plan carefully, however, and his plan for marriage fits exactly into the allegorical pattern already established.

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[1]William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (New York: Modern Library, 1964), p. 29.

Since Sutpen desires a lily white empire he wants to make certain that his marriage partner is pure white. Therefore, he goes to the logical place in the pre-Civil War South. He seeks his bride in the all white church, and just to make sure, he picks out the moral leader, the man most likely to be pure white as prospective father-in-law.

> They watched in shocked amazement while he laid deliberate siege to the one man in the town with whom he could have nothing in common, least of all money . . . . a Methodist steward, a merchant . . . . a man with a name for absolute and undeviating and even Puritan uprightness in a country and time of lawless opportunity, who neither drank nor gambled nor even hunted. In their surprise they forgot that Mr. Coldfield had a marriageable daughter. They did not consider the daughter at all. They did not think of love in connection with Sutpen.[1]

Without question, Sutpen and Goodhue Coldfield are opposites, they are symbols drawn from the vast allegory of Faulkner's mind. And Goodhue Coldfield, representing the spiritual life, the church in Civil War times, is as cold as his name implies. When the war breaks out, he locks and nails himself into a room refusing intercourse with the violent outside world. He becomes monk-like while Sutpen becomes more extreme in his physical characteristics. Old Rosa Coldfield pictures him as a demon, furious and lecherous. And his death comes violently at the hands of Wash Jones who cuts him down with a rusty scythe because Sutpen fails to claim paternity to Jones' granddaughter's child.

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[1] Ibid., p. 43.

Sutpen's empire falls around him because of the struggle which he refused to acknowledge within himself. For instance, it is his daughter who inherits his physical characteristics and his son who is more like the Coldfields. Rosa compares Mrs. Coldfield and daughter Judith, picturing them as being opposite extremes.

> . . . the adult who had escaped reality into a bland region peopled by dolls, or the young girl who slept waking in some suspension so completely physical as to resemble the state before birth and as far removed from reality's other extreme as Ellen was from hers.[1]

The climactic struggle of the book, however, comes between Sutpen's two sons. The men are only half-brothers, Bon by a previous marriage to a Haitian sugar planter's daughter and Henry, possessor of the Coldfield characteristics. Sutpen has denied Bon as his son because he fears that his first wife had a trace of Negro blood. Henry renounces his sonship when Sutpen refuses to let Bon marry Judith. Henry, of course, was unaware of the blood relationship. But when Sutpen finally does tell Henry the facts of Bon's background, Henry is moved to slay Bon to stop the marriage. The murder comes not because either Henry or his father is concerned with incest, but because of the very fear that Bon might possess Negro blood.

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[1] Ibid., p. 70.

There are similarities between Bon and Joe Christmas, in that neither of the two is certain whether there is really anything more than very dark French or Spanish blood in his respective family backgrounds. There are similarities also in the pattern of rebirth. When Bon dies in 1865 he is already the father of a child by a negro mistress. After Sutpen's death in 1869, the child is brought to live at the estate. Thus, for all of Sutpen's efforts, his only grandson and heir is without question the possessor of the very blood that Sutpen would deny. And Bon's son, Charles Etienne De Saint Velery Bon, is concerned about his mixed blood. He, like Joe Christmas, refuses Judith's offer to be received into the family and to take on the Sutpen name. He chooses instead to bear the suffering and the struggle which his mixed blood forces upon him. He marries an all black woman and brings her to live in a shack on the estate. Judith watches him

> walk back down the weedy lane between the deserted collapsed cabins toward that one where his wife waited, treading the thorny and flint-paved path toward the Gethsemane which he had decreed and created himself, where he had crucified himself.[1]

The final irony of the account, and the double Sutpen tragedy is reflected in the birth of still another child. Born to Bon II and his all black wife is a son, half black and half-witted, the final ironic tribute to the Sutpen pride. And the

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[1] Ibid., p. 209.

child's name reflects the allegory which Faulkner seeks to convey. He is no longer Bon (Good); he is now simply Jim Bond, bound by the very pride and foolishness of his allegorical ancestors.

The experiment with the development of character in Yoknapatawpha County's history was not the only experiment of Faulkner's early years. In the book Pylon, the author violated his pact with the county, choosing instead to capture the excitement and nostalgia that he himself felt for flying. He foresook the universality and hospitality of Yoknapatawpha for a study of the stark, lonely lives of air show competitors at New Valois, Louisiana. The author chose also to make a newspaper reporter of central importance in the book. Occasionally, Faulkner loaded the account with an overdose of jargon from either the newspaper or aviation fields which is burdensome to an unprepared general audience.

For these reasons the novel is slow to get off the ground. And though the allegory does not crash into the first pylon, it still does not soar to great heights.

There are reminders in the Pylon narrative of Sartoris. Roger Shumann and Jack Holmes might well be reincarnations of John Sartoris III. They represent lonely physical life. Yet they soar through realms of the spirit, flirting with death and laughing at fear. They are daring, reckless, and brave. They capture the elusive spirit of courage which Bayard

Sartoris so vainly sought. Their constant flirtation with danger has made them something more or less than human. The fascinated reporter views them this way:

> They ain't human like us; they couldn't turn those pylons like they do if they had human blood and senses and they wouldn't want or dare to if they just had human brains. Burn them like this one tonight and they don't even holler in the fire; crash and it ain't even blood when you haul them out; its cylinder oil the same as in the crankcase.[1]

The same reporter, however, sees their reckless courage as being an automatic passport beyond the trivialities of twentieth century life. He scans his own paper and sees

> the fragile web of ink and paper, assertive, proclamative; profound and irrevocable if only in the sense of being profoundly and irrevocably unimportant. . . the dead instant's fruit of forty tons of machinery and an entire nation's antic delusion.[2]

Both Shumann and Holmes are caught up in the very escape from triviality which the reporter envisions. They dedicate themselves to the pursuit of pleasure and thrills by means of stunt flying. Both also seek a type of solace and salvation in a woman, serenely cold and beautiful Laverne. Both Caddy Compson and Narcissa Benbow are merged in the personality of Laverne. Like Caddy she is promiscuous but wise. Like Narcissa she is serene but aloof.

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[1] William Faulkner, Pylon (New York: The New American Library, 1958), p. 29.

[2] Ibid., p. 68.

Of this strange triumvirate sexual relationship a child is born who fits the symbolic rebirth motif perfectly. He is like both possible fathers, so he is named Jack Shumann. And only at the death of Roger Shumann does the reader discover that the child is really his. To Roger's father the discovery is of utmost importance, for he sees his own son reflected in the child. But the allegory doesn't reach its fullness here. Faulkner has added a second child to complicate the allegory. Another reference to Sartoris is required.

Roger Shumann may be compared to Bayard Sartoris III in that he rides to his death in a machine which he knows is dangerous. But there the similarity ends. Bayard Sartoris III dies knowing that he is the father of an unborn child. He is unwilling to face the responsibilities of fatherhood. His death is an intentional escape, spiritual cowardice.

But Shumann is trying desperately to win enough money to provide for an unborn child that he knows is not his, but Jack Holmes'. Thus his death is one of sacrifice and spiritual heroism. As if to further prove his point, Faulkner goes to extra trouble to make sure that the body cannot be found. Thus, the daring reckless physical body of Roger Shumann is translated into the mysterious realm of the spirit, leaving only the hope of an unborn child as heir to its sacrifice. And a daring reckless seeker of aerial thrills ends his search for peace by an humble and honorable gesture of spiritual sacrifice.

All five accounts discussed in this chapter further Faulkner's apocrypha. All five develop the gospel of spirit and flesh in modern life. Yet each points an accusing finger at modern man from a slightly different perspective, falling short of the allegory in its complete expression.

Only Light in August accomplishes that task.

CHAPTER IV

LIGHT IN AUGUST: NEW LIGHT ON A DIFFICULT BOOK

Faulkner's preoccupation and fascination with the ideas of his rapidly growing and interlocking collections of the gospel according to Faulkner, drove him to compose still another allegorical presentation of struggle, death and rebirth in 1932. Light in August is the most detailed study of the entire series dealing with the twentieth century church. The allegory is most complete and most rewarding in this novel.

Many critics feel that Light in August is highly ambiguous and structurally disjointed. However, if the reader is prepared to search for the recurrent pattern displayed in earlier works, he soon discovers it to be beautifully structured and deeply meaningful.

Without question Light in August is a novel of struggle. There is Joe Christmas, constantly vacillating between black and white, self-condemned because he fears he may have Negro blood. Christmas wears black trousers, a white shirt, and worries with his bow tie. Just as Joe Christmas is torn between black and white so also was his obvious parallel, Jesus Christ torn between human and divine; between flesh and spirit. Christmas spends thirty years in bondage to his struggle, enslaved by the flesh. So also was it thirty years before Christ began his spiritual ministry.

Christmas is raised under the old harsh law. He, like Christ is adopted by a foster father. Christmas rebels against the law. He refuses to learn his catechism. He accepts punishment without question, but refuses to learn or accept McEachern's harsh creed. He intentionally violates every precept of the ritualistic creed which McEachern represents. Even when McEachern makes a covenant with him concerning the heifer, Christmas violates the agreement and the creed by selling the animal and lying about the profits. He even denies the name of his foster father. Thus, in many ways, Joe Christmas is either more or less than a Christ figure. In this case, he serves to illustrate the inability of the flesh to live under a law of the spirit.

Gail Hightower presents another example of severe inner struggle in the novel. He has long since withdrawn from physical life into a hermitage of the spirit. Once a preacher, he has now become simply a lonely gale in a high tower. He takes great pleasure in reminiscing, like Will Falls of Sartoris, on the heroic deeds of generations past. He suffers his own physical persecution over again, living also in those moments of the past when he mixed the passion and glory of a dead war into the spiritual diet of his congregation. He lives, like Joe Christmas for a moment which is neither light nor dark, day nor night. John Williams in Twentieth Century Literature suggests that

> His is the struggle between the old peace and comfort of static isolation and the uneasy joy involved in human participation in the human community.[1]

Like Joe Christmas, Hightower is clothed in a garb that marks his dualistic nature. He consistently wears black trousers and a white shirt.

At the conclusion of the novel, however, Hightower has come to realize that he has not been seeking a life of harmony between the spirit and the flesh. He realizes that he sought only the life of the spirit in the seminary,[2] and that his marriage failed because he failed to see woman as "not alone the recipient and receptacle of the seed of the body, but of the spirit, too."[3] Hightower finds that he has waited too long for involvement in the humanity of life, and, thus, he becomes involved in the lives of both Lena Grove and Joe Christmas.

Byron Bunch is another ascetic in this, Faulkner's most careful study of Christianity. Bunch whose lonely and scrupulous life includes only occasional visits with Hightower, and a Sunday trip to a country church as choir leader, is nearly as isolated as either Christmas or Hightower. Lena

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[1]John S. Williams, "The Final Copper Light of Afternoon: Hightower's Redemption," Twentieth Century Literature (January, 1969), 209.

[2]William Faulkner, Light In August (New York: The Modern Library, 1959), p. 419.

[3]Ibid., pp. 408, 409.

Grove brings him face to face with reality and humanity, and through Lena a genuine struggle begins to take place in Byron's life. He is deeply and physically attracted to her. Through a series of very real struggles, Bunch emerges as perhaps the most successful of Faulkner's allegorical characters. He learns to merge harmoniously the laws of spirit and flesh.

His lesson, however, is a difficult one. His most violent struggle is with Lucas Brown. The struggle with Brown has obvious parallels to the struggle that is taking place within Byron's own nature; Faulkner doesn't supply many details in regard to Brown's background, but name symbolism is of significant importance in this regard once again. Lena notes that the man she is looking for is Lucas Burch, and she calls attention to the similarity between the names of Burch and Bunch. Bunch discovers that Burch has merely changed his name and tries to reunite the couple.

Only one letter separates the names of Bunch and Burch, but their characters are widely divergent. They are intended as allegoric opposites. Burch is the fleshly father of the child; Bunch becomes father in spirit. Bunch prepares for battle with his alter ego knowing that his efforts will probably be in vain. He realizes that he will probably be loser in a battle to force Burch to admit the responsibilities of fatherhood.

One other character is also representative of a fierce inner struggle in Light in August. Borrowing from a similar family name in As I Lay Dying, Faulkner dubs one of his most tragic females, Joanna Burden. Like Christmas and Hightower, Joanna is also torn between black and white. She exists in white flesh, yet her only associates are black. She lets down her high spiritual standards for a wild physical night life with Joe Christmas. She dreams of bearing a child of mixed blood. Joe Christmas sees her as

> two creatures that struggled in that one body like two moongleamed shapes struggling, drowning in alternate throes upon the surface of a thick black pool beneath the last moon. Now it would be that still, cold contained figure of the first phase, who, even though lost and damned, remained somehow impervious and impregnable; then it would be the other, the second one, who in furious denial of that impregnability strove to drown in the black abyss of its own creating that physical purity which had been preserved too long now to even be lost. Now and then, they would come to the black surface, locked like sisters, and the black waters would drain away.[1]

Faulkner spends a considerable amount of ink in presenting an extensive family background for Joanna. Her family, like her existence, is torn between two extremes; they are either very light or very dark; they are either extremely religious or very rebellious to religion. The original Burden was a New England minister Nathaniel Burrington (one is reminded of blond, blue-eyed Nathaniel Hawthorne). His son Calvin

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[1] Ibid., p. 228.

appropriately runs away from home and starts the blood contrast moving by marrying a dark French girl. His son provides a vivid contrast:

> The two of them would be alone in the room: the tall gaunt Nordic man, and the small, dark, vivid child who had inherited his mother's build and coloring, like people of two different races.[1]

It is this small dark child who grows up to be Joanna Burden's father. Appropriately, her mother is a New Englander, so that she, too, is of mixed parentage, dark and light. She is named, fittingly enough, for her father's first wife, dark-skinned Spanish Juana. Joanna also is heir to another struggle, a struggle which culminated in Sartoris violence and the deaths of her grandfather and half-brother for supposed carpetbagging techniques. Hers was a history of struggle as complex and as allegorical as that of the other leading characters in the novel.

The allegory in Light in August is so finely polished that the reader may follow a logical pattern of (1) struggle, (2) death, and (3) rebirth. Nearly all of the deaths in Light in August may be seen as directly related to the struggle between flesh and spirit.

For instance, McEachern's death may reflect struggle on perhaps two levels. First, if the reader wished to view Joe Christmas as deliberately rebellious, it is a struggle

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[1] Ibid., p. 212.

between a spiritual father and a fleshly son. The contrast is deliberate in that McEachern catches his son in the act of spiritual disobedience and physical pleasure. Viewing the scene from another level, however, one may see the death as the necessary destruction or fulfillment of the old law. McEachern may be seen as the embodiment of the law, blindly serving an impossible code of righteousness. In keeping with Christ's plea that he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it, the reader at first, is not really sure that the old law embodied in McEachern dies. In fact, when the question is asked Joe Christmas, he replies "I don't know, I tell you. I hit him. He fell down. I told him I was going to do it someday."[1] In order to further establish Christmas' violent disgust with useless and worn out systems, Faulkner sets up another illustration, drawing again from, as he would put it, his lumberyard of symbols. McEachern's horse is a symbol of his spirit. Thus, when the horse is exhausted, spent, worn out, and no longer of service to Joe Christmas, he loses his temper and beats the horse violently, leaving him crumpled.

Joanna Burden, like McEachern and the horse, is rejected by Christmas when he realizes that she is too old to be of any further service to him. Therefore, her death, violent as it may be, comes as a culmination to struggle. In

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[1] Ibid., p. 188.

addition, her death marks the toppling of an old order. She is the last Burden, and the passing of the old order is complete. Christmas has rejected her offer of salvation through her name. She has offered him the opportunity to advance himself and to share in her philanthropic activities if he will confess his blood and use her name.

Joanna's death marks the culmination of two struggles: one within herself, and the other with Christmas. After Joe becomes aware of the fact that she is too old to bear a child, she says "maybe it would be better if we both were dead."[1] And on the night of the murder, it is Joanna who intends to murder Christmas and kill herself, uniting in death the relationship of life. Joe Christmas uses a razor to sever Joanna Burden's head from her body. Thus he releases her from the Burden of her guilt and culminates the great struggle of her existence. Joanna Burden bears no child to Joe Christmas, the only fruit of their intercourse is death. It is more than ironic that at the very moment, Lena enters Jefferson ready to bear a child which is later to be confused and associated with Joe Christmas. Out of the old order represented by Joanna is born nothing but death. But from the nameless, serene, new order is born a child of promise.

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[1] Ibid., p. 243.

Joanna's death may also be viewed as a sacrifice, accomplished and offered before the birth of the child. Joe learns the lesson of female menstruation by dipping his hands in the blood of a sheep, freshly killed. Joanna dies from a slashed throat, the means whereby the sacrificial lamb was slain. Thus the death might be viewed in at least two ways. First, Joe Christmas may be the Christ-like priest who offers the blood sacrifice as atonement for sin. Secondly, her death may be compared to the Passover sacrifice whereby the lamb was offered as a sacrifice so that the first-born son might live.

A great many interpretations have also been offered concerning the death of Joe Christmas. Of course, the most common theory is that of crucifixion. It is true that Christmas is likened to Christ. The persecution he endures is similar to that of Christ. Both figures meet death with a serene and peaceful attitude and offer no resistance. But there is no crucifixion as such. Faulkner's Biblical parallels just aren't that simple. There is ample evidence, however, that Christmas' death is intended to fit the allegorical pattern of culmination of struggle between flesh and spirit.

One might note, for instance, the man who is responsible for the death of Joe Christmas. His name is Percy Grimm, and he is as grim as death itself. Perhaps he is to represent the Grim Reaper. Both Grimm and Christmas are capable of murder and violence. Christmas, however, seems to realize that he

can no longer run away from his struggle. Like Bayard Sartoris he has tried to run away from his moral obligations, but unlike Bayard he finally decides that he is losing the struggle. Another interesting observation may be made concerning the fact that Lucas Burch and Byron Bunch are involved in a struggle with very similar characteristics at precisely the same time. In each struggle, the fleshly counterpart is victor. And Gail Hightower, in musing upon the murder, finds difficulty in separating the faces of Grimm and Christmas.

> That face alone is not clear. It is confused more than any other, as though now in the peaceful throes of a more recent, a more inextricable, compositeness. Then he can see that it is two faces which seem to strive . . . in turn to free themselves one from the other, then fade and blend again. But he has seen now, the other face, the one that is not Christmas, Why its . . . he thinks. I have seen it, recently . . . . Why its that boy. With that black pistol, automatic they call them. The one who . . . into the kitchen where . . . killed, who fired the . . . .[1]

Thus, it is in Grimm that Christmas realizes the ultimate struggle, that of himself, and as Faulkner would say, the human heart. Finally he is forced to choose between the flesh and the spirit, and he calmly chooses the spirit. The death scene itself reveals many of these characteristics.[2] For instance, Christmas climbs high into the house of Hightower, just as Christ climbed Calvary or Moses climbed Mt.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 430, 431.

[2] Ibid., p. 407.

Sinai. Christmas awaits death behind an overturned table, perhaps representative of the ten commandments, tables of stone. Christmas had symbolically overturned the "table" when he toppled McEachern, and symbolically, his death by the law is fulfillment of that law. It could also be noted that the shots penetrate the table, making it void. The Old Testament law was also in effect until the death of Christ.

The gruesome and brutally pointless castration of Christmas takes on new significance when the reader views the scene as the culmination of the struggle between spirit and flesh. It is sheer physical fleshly brutality which drives Grimm to this act of sickening violence. That Grimm's act is carnal is evidenced by his exclamation: "Now you'll let white women alone, even in Hell."[1] It is an act to rob a dying body of the symbol of the flesh, even at that moment, that last moment when physical life exists. Grimm's remarks show that he is purely physical, intent upon physical protection of a physical society, with no conception whatever of spiritual life. Christmas, however, is perfectly still; he offers no resistance. His struggle is over and he has found that perfect gray moment of peace, for which he has searched a lifetime.

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[1] Ibid.

And Faulkner seems to be most pleased with the success of the allegory in the case of Joe Christmas. Just to make certain that the reader also understands just what it is that he is getting at, he calls on Gavin Stevens to explicate the allegory.

> But there was too much running with him, stride for stride, breath for breath, thud for thud of the heart, using a single heart. It was not alone all those thirty years which she did know, but all those successions of thirty years before which had put that stain either on his white blood or his black blood whichever you will, and which killed him. But he must have run with believing for a while; anyway with hope. But his blood would not be quiet, let him save it. It would be neither one nor the other and let his body save itself. Because the black blood drove him first to the Negro cabin. And the white blood drove him out of there, as it was the black blood which snatched up the pistol and the white blood which would not let him fire it. And it was the white blood which sent him to the minister . . . . Then I believe the white blood deserted him for a moment. Just a second, a flicker, allowing the black to rise in its final moment and make him turn upon that on which he had postulated his hope of salvation . . . . And then the black blood failed him again, as it must have in crises all his life. He did not kill the minister . . . . Defied the black blood for the last time, as he had been defying it for thirty years. He crouched behind that overturned table and let them shoot him to death, with that loaded and unfired pistol in his hands.[1]

Faulkner, through Stevens, blends the struggle between black and white blood with the struggle between good and evil. And the whole passage adds up to a very careful explication of the struggle between the spirit and the flesh.

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[1] Ibid., p. 393.

To Christmas, death is the perfected moment of mingled serenity and peace. His eyes behold a perfect merger, the ultimate peace which he has long sought. Always before "he seemed to look down into a black well and at the bottom saw two glints like reflections of dead stars."[1] But death to Christmas brings a new outlook, a new focus. And to the dying Christmas the viewpoint is now such that he looks up into peace, instead of down into darkness.

> . . . for a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes.[2]

It is not without meaning that Faulkner conveys the peace which Christmas has attained in another Biblical image, that of the shepherd and the sheep.

> They are not to lose it, in whatever peaceful valleys, beside whatever placid and reassuring streams of old age . . . .[3]

The paraphrase is from the twenty-third Psalm:

> The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
> He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
> He leadeth me beside the still waters. He
> restoreth my soul.[4]

This careful and in-depth study of the Christian religion is probably most fully viewed, however, in the way that

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[1] Ibid., p. 137.

[2] Ibid., p. 407.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Psalm 23, King James Version of the Holy Bible.

allegorist Faulkner handles the theme of rebirth in Light In August. Indeed, the whole rebirth theme centers around the way Faulkner uses the church and Christian symbolism in the novel. In no other work is Faulkner so obsessed with Christian symbolism. And there certainly is no other in which the characters are so directly associated with the work of the church. Bunch is a choir leader, Hightower has been a minister, Doc Hines has done his type of preaching, and McEachern is obsessed with his Calvinism. Joanna Burden is descended from a minister, and Calvin is a repeated name in her family lineage.

There certainly must be a reason why Faulkner makes such deliberate use of the church in the book. There must also be a reason why he frames the story of Joe Christmas with the story of Lena Grove, a character whom Christmas never meets. There must also be a reason for the use of such unrelated characters as Bunch, Hightower, and Doc Hines. The link that connects them all is the church; and the infant born to Lena Grove is the embodiment of the church in Light In August. Furthermore, the infant is representative of rebirth in the novel.

The infant comes to Jefferson as yet unborn. It is struggling to be released from a too calm and serene mother. Infant and mother have come a long way on foot in search of a physical father named Burch. From the moment that the mother

and unborn child arrive the action thickens. All struggles come to a culmination. The very plot of the book stirs with life, just as the child prepares for birth.

It is on Monday morning when the baby boy is born.[1] The time is 5:00 a.m. and Hightower handles the details. That afternoon Hightower returns to the cabin to visit the mother and child. Lena is disturbed by the rantings of Mrs. Hines, grandmother of Joe Christmas, who has been helping to care for the infant. Like Aunt Jenny of Sartoris, Mrs. Hines wants to associate the child with a child from her own past.

> "She keeps on calling him Joey. When his name ain't Joey!" Her eyes are puzzled now, questioning, doubtful. "She keeps on talking about . . . "She keeps on talking about him like his pa was that Mr. Christmas. She keeps on and then I get mixed up too and I think that his pa is that Mr. - Mr. Christmas too."[2]

Hightower doesn't really do much to clarify the issue in Lena's mind. In fact, he further muddies the water by introducing Byron into the picture, warning Lena not to get Byron mixed up any more in this question of fatherhood. Lena is really confused by this time, because Byron has already told her that he would bring Burch to see mother and child.

It is really small wonder that Lena Grove is troubled. She is suddenly faced with a trinity of fathers for her child.

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[1] William Faulkner, Light In August, op. cit., p. 344.

[2] Ibid., p. 359.

But her struggle is only the first of those explosive August Monday struggles. For no sooner does Hightower leave the cabin at 4:00 p.m.[1] than Burch appears. Byron sees Burch enter the cabin at 4:00 p.m.[2] At 6:00 p.m. that evening Byron Bunch gets onto a wagon. Lucas Burch has battered Byron Bunch and taken a fast train away from responsibility without even waiting for his reward money. Gail Hightower nurses a battered head and watches for the twilight hour. Joe Christmas has been dead for an hour.[3] Lena's baby is not yet one day old. It has been a day of climactic struggles. All of the struggles may be traced to the child, whose birth sets off explosive action immediately.

The connection is drawn to Joe Christmas by Mrs. Hines' contention that the child is not only the embodiment of a prisoner who is standing on the brink of death, but also the son of that figure. Given Faulkner's allegory, the reader is forced to see the child as the embodiment of Joe Christmas, Christ figure.

The child should also be Christ-like if he is to represent a resurrected Christ. He is. Here are some of the characteristics: (1) a serene mother who is just as conspicuously pregnant with an illegitimate child as Mary must have

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[1] Ibid., p. 362. [2] Ibid., p. 371.

[3] Ibid., p. 387.

been, (2) a foster father who is willing to undergo much the same criticism that Joseph must have borne, (3) a bright light in the sky to herald his coming, and (4) a humble birthplace.

Here the reader is forced to carry both the Biblical and Faulknerian motifs one step further. In order that the child may be both son and body of the Christ figure, it is first necessary that death occur. Thus the heir, or the church, becomes the new body. It is also significant that Jesus Christ becomes the head of the new body. With this statement in mind, one might carefully review the passage where Joe Christmas removes the head of an old body (Joanna Burden). Colossians 1:18 may be used as an explanation. "And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn of the dead."[1]

If the birth of Lena's child is to represent the birth of the church, the reader should note that New Testament scholars generally agree that the church first came into existence on the day of Pentecost. This day was one of three great annual festivals and was also called the Feast of Harvest.[2] Lena's infant is born during the ripe, full time of summer harvest. In addition, every one of the struggles in the novel is harvested at the time of the child's birth.

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[1] Colossians 1:18, King James Version of the Holy Bible.

[2] Exodus 23:16, King James Version of the Holy Bible.

The second chapter of the book of Acts lists three supernatural events which occurred on that feast day: the appearance of tongues of fire, a "sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind," and the sudden ability of the apostles to speak in "other tongues." These supernatural signs were explained in Acts by quoting from a prophecy from the book of Joel.

> I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall see visions . . . . And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.[1]

Without stretching the imagination a great deal the reader can see parallels between this passage and the novel. For instance, on that bright August morning, there certainly seemed to be an outpouring of the spirit upon the flesh. The result was a day of fierce struggle which offers the very heat of the novel to the reader. Both Doc Hines and his wife seem capable of prophecy, in one sense of the word. Hightower has a dream, full of faces and wheels. Joe Christmas dies with eyes transfixed as if beholding a vision. And from the moment Lena arrives in Jefferson, the strange wonders are visible. Lena sees two columns or pillars of smoke.[2] One is a smoke stack. The other is from the burning Burden house. And the

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[1]Joel 2:28, 30, 31, King James Version of the Holy Bible.

[2]Faulkner, Light In August, op. cit., p. 26.

reader learns immediately that there is also blood at that burning house.

In addition to these parallels, Faulkner has scattered numerous references to both the speaking in strange tongues and the rushing mighty wind throughout the novel. Two instances may be noted. In the travail of childbirth Lena speaks with "a wailing cry in a tongue unknown to man."[1] Mrs. Hines speaks to the new-born child also "in a no known tongue."[2]

Gail Hightower's dream is full of the strange sounds of rushing winds. The wheel moves with a "long, sighing sound."[3] And Byron Bunch, motionless on the hill, watches Burch escape through the back window of the cabin.

> Then a cold hard wind seems to blow through him. It is at once violent and peaceful, blowing hard away like chaff or trash or dead leaves all the desire and the despair and the hopelessness and the tragic and vain imagining too.[4]

And Byron Bunch on that lonely hill feels the joyous mystery which Joe Christmas envisions at his death, which Gail Hightower captures in a dream, and which the Apostle Paul records in the New Testament. It is the outpouring of spirit on flesh, the struggle to the death, and the "at once violent and peaceful" rebirth.

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[1] Ibid., p. 350. [2] Ibid., p. 353.

[3] Ibid., p. 430. [4] Ibid., p. 373.

Light In August is a fine, moving and powerful book. It is an extended study of Christianity in allegorical form by a man caught up and fascinated by a growing and imaginative concept of the role of Christianity in the modern world. It is a product developed upon the experience of four previous books, and three years of serious creative thought. It is a masterpiece of literary handiwork but can only be most fully appreciated and understood when viewed as the allegorical representation that it is. Though the novel borrows heavily from Christian doctrine, it is not complimentary to twentieth century Christianity. Like its predecessors, it is critical of the weakness and foolishness of the modern church. And Faulkner suggests hope that new generations will improve upon the Hightowers, Bunches, and Hineses and make the Christian world aware again of the necessity for human involvement.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the nine years from 1929 to 1938 William Faulkner turned out eight novels which, in one way or another, drew upon the same Biblical pattern of struggle, death and rebirth. Each book approached the study from a different perspective, yet all are bounded within the same allegorical limitations.

In example after example, William Faulkner shows man caught in the same dilemma of the human heart. And time after time, Faulkner's characters are viewed as they face a struggle within the boundaries of their own moral existence.

Spiritual heroes who succeed in the battle are few. But the old allegory is repeated each time with renewed vigor, and it is the struggle, not the hero that Faulkner is interested in. This fact alone explains much of Faulkner's greatness: he reports life honestly and in depth.

Faulkner's early Apocrypha of eight books of the gospel according to Faulkner show him to be a man astute, philosophical, and concerned. And his real concern seems to be with the tragic condition of the church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the southern United States. To Faulkner the church should have been a moral agent, a redeeming force. But the tragedy revealed in every version of the allegory is that the church has not only lost its humanity, but also its

warmth. Goodhue Coldfield, Narcissa Benbow, Benjy Compson, Gail Hightower, Doc Hines, Byron Bunch, Temple Drake, and Reverend Whitfield are the allegorical figures who represent the crumbling values of a church without focus and direction in a modern world.

But ineffective as the church is, Faulkner seems to say there is hope for the world and the church because of the very pattern of struggle. Out of the struggle, climactic struggle, comes death, the death of old, worn out rituals, and the rebirth from within of beautiful new hope.

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